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REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF AN ADDITIONAL ITEM IN THE AGENDA
OF THE FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

OBSERVER STATUS FOR THE SOVEREIGN MILITARY ORDER OF MALTA
IN CONSIDERATION OF ITS SPECIAL ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL
HUMANITARIAN RELATIONS

Note verbale dated 24 June 1994 from the representatives of
Argentina, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, the Czech Republic,
Ecuador, Guatemala, Hungary, Italy, Lebanon, Lithuania,
Malta, Morocco, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal,
Romania, San Marino, Thailand, Togo, Uruguay, Venezuela and
Zaire addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from our Governments, we are writing to request, in accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the agenda of the forty-eighth session of the Assembly of an additional item entitled "Observer status for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta in consideration of its special role in international humanitarian relations".

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure, an explanatory memorandum and a draft resolution are annexed to the present letter.

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Permanent Representative
of Argentina to the
United Nations

(Signed) Jean-Marie Kacou GERVAIS
Permanent Representative
of Côte d'Ivoire
to the United Nations

(Signed) René Valéry MONGBE
Permanent Representative of
the Republic of Benin
to the United Nations

(Signed) Mario NOBILO
Permanent Representative
of the Republic of Croatia
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(Signed) Dusan ROVENSKY
Chargé d'affaires a.i.
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(Signed) Javier PONCE
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Permanent Mission of Ecuador
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(Signed) Julio Armando MARTINI HERRERA
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(Signed) André ERDÖS
Permanent Representative
of the Republic of Hungary
to the United Nations

(Signed) F. Paolo FULCI
Permanent Representative
of Italy
to the United Nations

(Signed) Khalil MAKKAWI
Permanent Representative
of Lebanon
to the United Nations

(Signed) Anicetas SIMUTIS
Permanent Representative
of the Republic of Lithuania
to the United Nations

(Signed) Joseph CASSAR
Permanent Representative
of Malta
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(Signed) Ahmed SNOUSSI
Permanent Representative
of the Kingdom of Morocco
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(Signed) Erich C. VILCHEZ ASHER
Permanent Representative
of Nicaragua
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(Signed) Ronald B. ALLAREY
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(Signed) Zbigniew Maria WLOSOWICZ
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(Signed) Pedro CATARINO
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of Portugal
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Permanent Representative
of the Republic of Romania
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(Signed) Pier Giovanni GUARDIGLI
Permanent Representative
of the Republic of San Marino
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(Signed) Nitya PIBULSONGGRAM
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(Signed) Biova-Soumi PENNANEACH
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(Signed) María del Luján FLORES
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(Signed) Enrique TEJERA PARIS
Permanent Representative
of Venezuela
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(Signed) LUKABU KHABOUJI N'ZAJI
Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the
Permanent Mission of the
Republic of Zaïre to the
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ANNEX

Explanatory memorandum

1. The Sovereign Military Order of Malta is the oldest institution in the world whose mission it is to provide humanitarian assistance. Ever since its foundation in Jerusalem almost nine centuries ago, the Order has been steadfast in its dedication to alleviating human suffering in war and in peace. Over the centuries this vocation has earned it universal respect for its humanitarian activities in the world and recognition of its full sovereignty as an equal member of the international community, by 64 States Members of the United Nations.
2. Consistent with its long tradition, the Order today is governed by a central institution, the Grand Magistry, while its operations are managed for the most part by the nine priorates and sub-priorates and the 41 national Knights Associations on all the continents, and, to some extent, directly by the Grand Magistry's headquarters at Rome. The Order has approximately 10,500 members, who can boast the support of thousands of volunteers. They are loyal citizens of their respective countries, a condition that is not compromised by their membership in the Order, which is a supplemental, supranational honour.
3. The largest and most active Associations are the following: the Italian Association has 2,500 knights and their Assistance Corps; the United States has three Associations, which have offered commendable services to the needy throughout the American continents; the German and Austrian Knights have the "Malteser Hilfsdienst", who mobilize thousands of volunteers and provide outstanding emergency services throughout Germany and in the bordering countries; the French Association runs an impressive network of hospitals and clinics in the third world and especially in Africa; the Irish Association maintains an important presence in its country, with ambulances and volunteers. The smaller Associations, in their turn, bring exceptional services to developing countries, despite trying conditions and scarce financial resources.
4. The Order's primary objective to alleviate suffering and bring the comfort of charity to the afflicted is embodied in its commitment to providing assistance. The Order achieves this goal wherever it can through health facilities, and also through individual services at homes, in shelters and in the poor dwellings of the disinherited. Its commitment is not towards the sick alone, but also to the marginalized, the persecuted and the displaced, thereby safeguarding human rights and the dignity of man.
5. Today the Order provides assistance at a level that far exceeds anything it was traditionally able to offer. The octagonal cross has become the emblem of hospitals, some with a high degree of specialization, but also of hundreds of clinics, first-aid stations and dispensaries, with a broad network of structures and specialized assistance for the needy. Among the groups to whom the Order dedicates special attention are the handicapped, lepers, diabetics, pregnant women, the elderly and abandoned children. It also arranges for the collection and distribution of medicine, especially in cases of epidemics and natural catastrophes.

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6. Finally, the Order has been instrumental in organizing emergency humanitarian assistance during political and social crises. For example, in 1989 it arranged for thousands of East German refugees to flee to West Germany through Hungary and Austria and helped shelter 30,000 Romanian refugees of Hungarian origin.

7. The Order of Malta was one of the first to provide assistance and humanitarian support to the victims of civil war in the former Yugoslavia, in the form of food, health, and pharmaceutical aid, as well as transportation, for the sick, the wounded, the persecuted and the displaced.

8. In order to better perform the duties with which it has been charged, the Order of Malta coordinates its activities with all the other organizations involved in humanitarian activities: the Governments of donor countries and of recipient countries, as well as national and international aid agencies. They also seek out and facilitate our collaboration. There are specific arrangements for contacting Governments: in addition to the diplomatic or official representatives present in many countries, the Grand Magistracy of the Order is represented by accredited delegations to numerous international agencies and institutes, including the United Nations offices at Geneva and Vienna, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Commission of the European Union at Brussels, the Council of Europe at Strasbourg, France, and the International Institute of Humanitarian Law at San Remo, Italy. Moreover, the Order has observer status at certain international organizations closely tied to the United Nations, namely: the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Migration Organization (IMO) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

9. These forms of representation have greatly improved the abilities of the Order and these organizations to provide assistance by allowing them to pool information, share experiences and identify together the most suitable forms of cooperation for different circumstances.

10. Although these remarks make clear the Order's long-standing participation in the United Nations family, the existing situation could be improved by granting the Order permanent observer status at the proceedings of the General Assembly. There is no doubt that this would further enhance cooperation between the United Nations and the Order of Malta, and facilitate the Order's humanitarian activities.

APPENDIX

Draft resolution: observer status for the Sovereign Military
Order of Malta in consideration of its special role in
international humanitarian affairs

The General Assembly,

Considering the long-standing dedication of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta in providing humanitarian assistance, and its special role in international humanitarian relations,

Desirous of enhancing cooperation between the United Nations and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta,

1. Decides to invite the Sovereign Military Order of Malta to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer;

2. Requests the Secretary-General to take the necessary action to implement the present resolution.
